

THE JEWISH GAILY

FORWARD

SHA'AR ZAHAV

שַׁעַר זָהָב

• FEBRUARY 1980

off the (eastern) wall

Sha'ar Zahav's first social last saturday night was billed in a very appropriate manner. It was indeed, a Turning Point for us. Both the dance, and our joint participation together the following day in the March on Sacramento, marked significant "firsts" for our congregation.

When Sha'ar Zahav was founded 2½ years ago, it was envisioned as much more than simply a place to worship together. One of the prime motivating factors was the knowledge that gay and lesbian Jews in San Francisco--being in many cases separated from their families physically and/or emotionally--needed to build their own Jewish family here. In the tradition of the synagogue serving as the focus for the community, the extended Jewish family, we saw Sha'ar Zahav as being the focal point for a gay Jewish community in San Francisco. Although we've had many activities in addition to our friday night and Holiday services over the years, it seemed to me that the 2 events of last week represented a turning point for us--more than in the past, I began to sense a growing and caring community.

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In some ways, the 2 events were very different: one was a social event, the other, a civil rights rights activity. But the dance had serious overtones--serving as a model for a necessary on-going fund-raising activity, and the March had recreational over-tones; there was a real sense of fun and camaraderie that almost made us forget the adverse climatic conditions. The common element to both events was the sense of togetherness that was present--the feeling that Sha'ar Zahav was finally beginning to coalesce as a coherent, effective organization capable of truly serving the needs of its community.

I think the Dance and the March also demonstrated some of our human resources.

The Dance was chaired by Sandy Weisman and with a committee of hard-workers; our participation in the March was coordinated by Rob Montague. Sandy, and most of the people who worked with him on the myriad details of the dance were newcomers to Sha'ar Zahav--within the last several months. Rob, who smoothly managed our part in the March, has been with Sha'ar Zahav almost since the beginning deserve our thanks for their work. Sandy and Rob represent both new and established sources of strength upon which our congregation must continue to depend. In order to grow in the coming decade--which we really began with a bang, we need input of ideas and work from both new-comers and old-timers. I hope these 2 events will serve as models for other such future activities.

In both Saturday night and Sunday, I felt really good about being involved in Sha'ar Zahav and I hope we continue in this spirit.

Daniel Chesir
Co-Leader

the family circle

We are a warm and loving family circle... beneath a green and growing family tree! We are just about to count to 100!!! One Hundred members of this incredible mishpucha; and they said it couldn't be done. There is nothing we can't do...our time is now...our time is always!

Last Shabbat at services I was very proud and happy. We had such a large attendance, now getting to be the rule rather than the exception, that we lacked needed legroom between rows. Allan led a beautiful song-filled service (many thanks to Elka Abrahamson for filling our atmosphere with music). During the Oneg, I had the joy of receiving three new membership cards.

Congregation Sha'ar Zahav gets better and better, week by week...and YOU make it happen. If you're a member, be very proud. If you're not yet a member, please be proud for us and of what you share with us.

Happily I announce that George Lucas has accepted the task of assisting in the chairing of the committee until the next Va'ad elections this spring. George has been a member longer than I and his talent and willingness to accept responsibility will greatly enhance the effectiveness of our committee.

We have acquired a huge quantity (and we will need them all) of Sha'ar Zahav buttons. They are very attractive and serve a very special function. They will be worn by people attending our services for the first time. PLEASE when you see someone with a button, go up and say Hello! Remember how important it was to YOU to feel welcome when you first came to us?? Do a mitzva and make a friend!

The membership committee continues to meet on a regular monthly basis, the 2nd Wednesday of each month at 6:30 pm. You are encouraged to attend and add your talent (you are SO talented) to our efforts. The meeting place changes each month; call me for location. The Feb 13th meeting is at my home.

Shalom

Leila Raim, Co-Chair
Membership Committee

from where i stand

It's beginning to seem that the only time I ever get a chance to write anything for the Forward is when I am either leaving for or returning from a trip somewhere. This time I have just returned from a trip to Palm Springs, where Steven Fritsch Rudser and I attended the annual convention of the Pacific Association of Reform Rabbis. The weather was less than perfect, unless you like lots of water. And the program was interesting, although I would not call it exciting.

I was pleased, though, to have the opportunity to meet with a few of the leading Reform rabbis from the area and from the rest of the country.

I would simply like to comment on what took place in some of those meetings. In an ongoing attempt to ensure access to the leaders of Reform Judaism in this country, I try to speak with anyone I can at these meetings, especially if I think their political support for the cause of re-integrating lesbian and gay Jews into a welcoming Judaism is worth pursuing. In this case there were three people to whom I wished to speak on this trip: 1) Rabbi Alexander Schindler, President of the Union of American Hebrew Congregations, to whom I had spoken when I visited New York in November; 2) Rabbi Joseph Glaser, Executive Vice President of the Central Conference of American Rabbis; and 3) Dr. Alfred Gottschalk, President of the Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion, the four-campus Reform seminary.

While I was unable to get together with Schindler for longer than about five minutes, we have been speaking by telephone about the proposed program to be presented at the national board meeting of the UAHC in May. I am encouraged by Rabbi Schindler's warmth and determination that we have an opening for our return to an active Jewish life, if we so desire it.

My surprise came from my conversation with Rabbi Glaser. Since I felt that it was important that there be some support for our proposed educational program not only from the UAHC but from the CCAR as well, I wanted to inform him of my plans, hoping that he would be supportive of them.

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Since I had known him to be tolerant of things gay, but not well-versed in such matters, and, since it was my impression that he preferred not to have such matters occupying the attention of the Conference all the time, I was uneasy about our breakfast meeting. As it happens, by the time breakfast was over, he had appointed me to the newly-formed subcommittee on Human Sexuality of the Family Life Committee of the Conference, to serve both as committee member and as a consultant on matters pertinent to the committees. He agreed that the Schindler-Bennett educational program idea had some merit, and that it sounded like it ought to be given a chance. Without going into further detail, I should state that I think this appointment gives us the sort of entree that we want and need with the organization which is comprised of about 1000 Reform rabbis in this country and abroad. At the same time, my meeting with Dr. Gottschalk was less promising. It was my goal to interest him in broadening the scope of the human relations curriculum at the "College" in the hope that some training in human sexuality might be included. It is my impression that whatever exists in the curriculum at this time is at least inadequate, if not insidious. Gottschalk was not in a position to accede to anything, nor was he interested in talking much about rabbis in the field who were gay, and whose lives were seriously troubled because they had no support from their colleagues, their congregations, or their seminary when it came to dealing with their own gayness and their profession. I believe that, if nothing else, I nudged him a little closer to realizing that we have a whole host of Jews out there whom we are not serving, and a whole host of rabbis who are still not being adequately trained to serve them.

Steven and I were received warmly, for the most part. We were both quite nervous about the situation in which we found ourselves, since our presence there together was, in and of itself, something of a political statement.

One of my colleagues, a friend from "College" days,

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asked me a question off the record. To put it into context I should include that I had just been elected to a two-year term on the Executive Board of PARR, at this convention, and he came up to me after the meeting and said, "When are you going to be able to send me your newsletter in something other than a plain gray wrapper?"

For me, it was a sad moment. With all the great strides forward that we had made, he was bringing home a truth which made me sad and uncomfortable. His complaint was not aimed at us; rather at the society which made it difficult for some people to receive private mail from organizations such as ours without jeopardizing their personal security in employment or other relationships.

His question reminded me of how far we have to go before we can rest from our task. But, if nothing else, the meetings at this convention gave me an indication that we will not be alone in our struggle.

Allen

women's chavara

On Saturday, Jan. 19th, the Women's Chavara held the monthly Havdula pot luck dinner at the home of Irene Ogus. Nine women attended and brought enough food to serve 20 (Nu, what would you expect. We Jews are famous for doing too much of a good thing.) Next month hopefully there will be twenty women. . will that mean food for thirty five? The food was, of course delicious. The company was better than excellent. The brief Havdulah service a source of warmth and a focal point for bringing us together to share in the joy of Shabbat and to usher out the Queen. Next month the meeting place will be the home of Penny Dachinger. All women are most cordially invited. Please call to discuss menu needs. Leave your name and number with our answering service, 626-3131.

COME SHARE THE JOYS OF SISTERHOOD

ritual committee

Above and beyond the fact that most of its members are gay, Sha'ar Zahav is not the run-of-the-mill American synagogue. Rather than employing a full time rabbi, cantor, and other individuals to lead services, we function more as a religious collective. This has its advantages and disadvantages. On one hand our services are richly varied, and there is room for innovation. More importantly, each member has the opportunity to participate in and even lead services which allows us to take responsibility for our religious worship, rather than being passive about our Jewish experience. On the other hand, we sometimes lack continuity in the quality and content of our Shabbat services. Someone must co-ordinate who will be leading services and make sure that what they plan to do will not offend the congregation.

Unfortunately, it can be difficult for us to take advantage of this experience. We may feel that as nonprofessionals, we might not be able to handle the responsibility of leading worship services. Despite our "open pulpit" policy, it is the same nucleus of individuals who lead services week after week.

So, you say, "what can I do? I haven't had any religious training since I was 13, and I can't read Hebrew." It's hard to break through our socialization and recognize that any member of Sha'ar Zahav is not only welcome, but urged to share their talents with the congregation. Do you have a message you'd like to share with the community in the form of a sermon, a prayer, or a poem? Then get involved.

If you don't want to be responsible for a whole service (and this is particularly directed at those of you who don't feel you could lead the Hebrew parts of the service) volunteer to co-lead services, or to take care of the English parts only, or even just to deliver the sermon or read an inspirational work of your own or someone else's composition.

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These are your services, and it's your duty, privilege, and opportunity to share yourself with the congregation. Sha'ar Zahav is not just supported by your dues. We need your input too.

And now, the commercial.. All you have to do in order to lead a service is to participate in a liturgy workshop led by Rabbi Allen Bennett. You will not only learn all you will need for leading services, but more than you thought you could learn about Jewish worship and Shabbat services in one afternoon. If you do not want to lead services, you are more than welcome to come anyway. We will try to hold these workshops once a month. The next one is scheduled for Saturday, February 9, from 10 to 3 at Allen Bennett's house, 1650 Page Street. Bring a bag lunch. For more details, please call me at 861-4142, or Allen at 861-4776.

notice

KEEP US POSTED

We want to join you in celebrating mitzvahs and commemorating Yahrzeits!

Each month you read a list of birthdays, anniversaries, and Yahrzeits in our Jewish Gaily FORWARD. This information is taken from the data you supply on your membership card. As these data can and do change, (another's birthday, a new anniversary, a recent loss of a loved one). I'm sure our present records are not totally correct and up to date.

Please let us know of additions and/or changes. If you have ANY questions or problems PLEASE call me. We want to serve you properly.
Leila R. Raim
Co-Chair Membership Committee

study groups

Wouldn't it be nice to get together with other Sha'ar Zahavniks at a time other than Friday night services? The education, outreach, ritual, and program committees have come together to offer the congregation a series of events combining educational, religious, and social elements for this very purpose. Because they are scheduled for the last Saturday of each month, they are labelled "last Saturday study groups." (To call something a workshop which takes place on Shabbat seemed like a contradiction in terms).

Each of these study groups will include a potluck dinner or lunch and will conclude with a havdalah service at the end of the Sabbath. They will be held at member's homes, and will be casual forums for learning.

The first study group which took place on January 27, was on the spirit of the Sabbath. It explored the origins of Shabbat, Orthodox observance of it, and ways in which we can bring the Sabbath, the "first of the Holy Festivals" into our lives.

The next study group, at the end of this month will be on the little-known ritual of havdalah, the ceremony for the conclusion of the Sabbath. We all know how Shabbat is ushered in; this study group will teach you how to usher it out. The ceremony itself is very short but beautiful, and there is a wealth of tradition surrounding it. The study group will take place on Saturday, February 23. Call Laurie or Mike Zimmerman for location. We will learn about havdalah, share a potluck dinner, and conclude with--what else?, a havdalah service.

If you are interested in joining us for this event, or for subsequent Last Saturday study groups, either as a participant or a facilitator, please call Laurie Radovsky at 861-4142, or Michael Zimmerman at 647-6344.

Future topics are Passover, and Sabbath ritual objects.

education committee

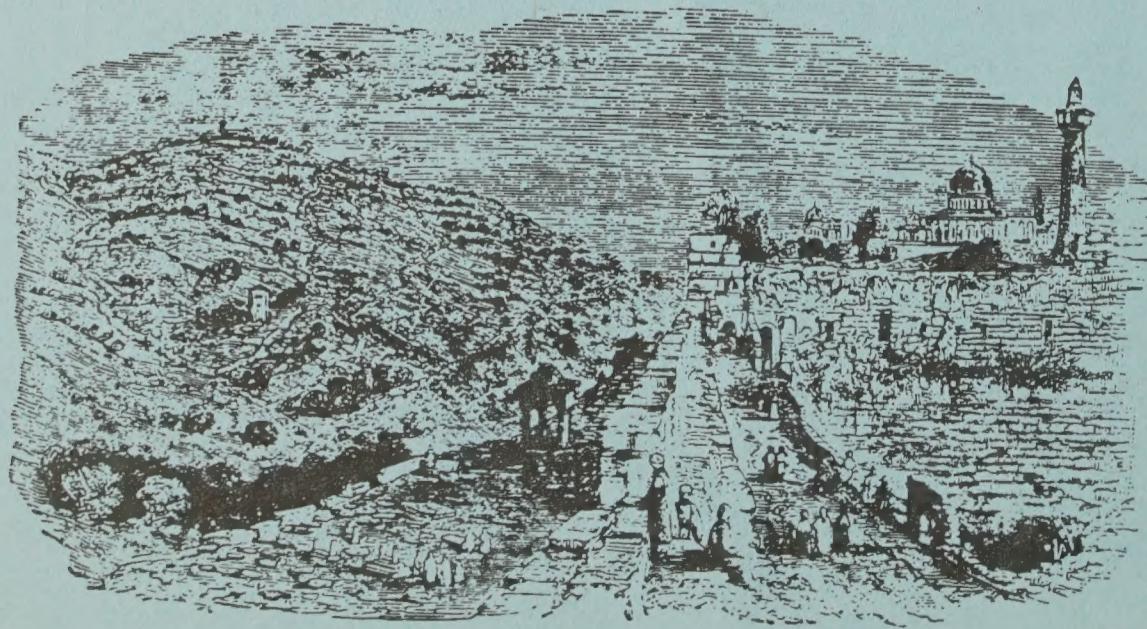
As I take upon myself the duty of chairing the education committee, I wish to acknowledge the committee's gratitude to Steven Fritsch Rudser who served as its acting chair giving it his talent and devotion, values which I believe have been reflected in the activities during his tenure.

This spring semester Sha'ar Zahav is going to offer two classes in beginning and intermediate Biblical Hebrew (with a stress on our prayer book) beginning with February 5th. Beginning Biblical Heb JCC Room 101, Tues 7:30 Intermed. Biblical Heb JCC Room 101, Tues 8:30

The education committee is pleased to announce the following program for the month of March. A workshop titled "Death - is it good for the Jews?" conducted by Michael Freedland and Rabbi Allen Bennett. The workshop will take place on March 1 at 2 pm at 1650 Page St. San Francisco.

If you have any suggestions for classes which you would like to see being offered by Sha'ar Zahav or would be willing to teach one, please let me know as soon as possible during the "oneg" or by calling me at 221-9138.

Haim Gamburg
Chair, Education Committee



THE TEMPLE AREA AND MOUNT OF OLIVES FROM THE CITY WALL.

letters to the editor

For about six weeks I had stopped showing up for services on erev Shabbat. I had too many other things to do; besides, I was working six or seven days a week through the holiday season and I couldn't be bothered attending Reform services -- I would rather just light Shabbat candles and say kiddush at home by myself. But after the rush of the holiday season, I found myself drawn back to shul. I found that I had missed my kehilla, my "family" of people and faces that I had grown fond of and accustomed to having around me on Shabbat. It felt good to be back. Things on the whole seemed to be a lot better; the people more friendly, with a lot less open sexism and ageism. This is not to say that it doesn't exist; it just seems that people are working harder, (myself included), at changing their views of others for the better.

But I am still very troubled by a few in our group, and I think they know who they are. Very few people know that I had changed my name three years ago from a very Anglicized to a very Hebraized one. I had my reasons for doing so, one of which was that I wanted to identify more with my Jewish background. Anyway, a couple of people who do know have been teasing me with it at shul. But I don't find it so funny. I am also surprised at all the "tacky" remarks that many members of long-standing have been making towards Michael and myself since we have been seeing each other. Instead of being supportive, as one expects from one's family, some people are acting in ways which are inappropriate and destructive. I need to point out that these people are all men. I wish that these few men would take some lessons from the women on how to be more supportive and less antagonistic towards each other. The straight world gives us enough hassles the way it is; we do not need more hassles on Shabbat. What we need is more Shabbat shalom, peace of the sabbath. I do not think that this is such a hard goal to realize -- it is one we can all work on and achieve if we only put a little more effort into it.

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As the Talmud says, "We should not gossip about others because it lowers us in the eyes of G-d." Also, "To shame a man in public is like shedding his blood." Baba Metzia 68b.

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I want to thank Sandy and Michael and all the others who made the dance "A Turning Point" possible -- because of the dance there has beena great turning point in my life. Tov m'od.

senior outreach

Purim visit: Saturday March 1 @ 1:30pm
Passover visit: Saturday April 5 @ 1:30pm

We will again visit the Hampshire Conval-secnt Hospital, 1420 Hampshire St, San Francisco. We expect about five Jewish residents but will know the exact number a week before the visit. Small gifts appropriate for the holidays are always appreciated as are magazines or personal items. Use your imagination. Food items such as Hamataschens for purim are usually allowed on most patient's diets.

Sam Thal 285-6845

Coordinator

challah workshop

Even if you have never baked anything more elaborate than a brownie mix, you can learn how to create the braided Sabbath delicacy known as challah. Laurie Radovsky will be leading a workshop in the religious and culinary aspects of challah on Sunday, February 10.

The fruits of our labors will be frozen and shared with the congregation at the following Friday's Oneg. The workshop will take place from noon until approximately 6 pm. For more information and for the location and to sign up in advance, please call Laurie at 861-4142

Services

The following people will be leading services at Sha'ar Zahav during the month of February:

Feb 1 Tubishevat service, Haim Gamburg

Feb 8 Daniel Chesir

Feb 15 Allen Bennett

Feb 22 Michael Freedland

Feb 29 Pre-Purim service, Laurie Radovsky

Dear Sisters and Brothers:

Just a note of thanks from me to you for helping to make the Turning Point a success. We made \$407.12 profit on the dance. Our income from the tickets was \$950.00. Our net from the refreshments was \$23.76. Our expense, which included band, refreshments, tickets and printing was 399.64. Needless to say, I am very pleased, but would have enjoyed it more if everyone had sold at least two tickets apiece. This would have raised our profits considerably.

I would like to especially thank Michael Kretman, Herb Cohn, John Petry, Jay Johnson, Victoria Phillips, Laurie Radovsky for helping to chair their committees, and for the special work they did.

I hope that we can do more things like this again.

Love and Peace
Sandy Weisman

p.s. If anyone has any pictures of the dance for publication, please call me at 474-8405.

donations

Thanks to the following for their donations to Congregation Sha'ar Zahav last month:

Philip Charney
Paul Glackman
Mark Hunter
Gerald Rosenstein
Alan Schrager
Sam Thal

The variety of reasons for which people are making donations to Sha'ar Zahav continues to grow. Contributions to the general fund, as well as to the Building, Prayerbook, and Harvey Milk Memorial Funds are excellent ways in which to remember significant people and occasions. Won't you honor or memorialize someone with a contribution to your synagogue in their name?

If you would like to make a donation to the congregation in honor of an event, a person, or in memory of someone, all such contributions will be gratefully accepted. Contributions in any amount (\$2.00 minimum) will be most welcome. If you would prefer that we not acknowledge your contribution in the FORWARD, please indicate that on your check or in a note enclosed with it.

wanted

A 2-3 bedroom with fireplace, yard for 2 cats, spacious, warm sunny, big kitchen for 2 wonderful women, clean.

Can pay up to \$425. Please call 565-6135 or 824-6638
Shelly/Gabriele

yahrzeits

Feb. 16 Dora Rifkin
Feb. 20 Albert Rudolph
Feb. 25 J.S. Sinai
Adar 6 Max Raim

birthdays

Feb. 3 David Gass
Feb. 6 Theodore Levy
Feb. 11 Robert Stern
Feb. 14 Irene Ogus
Feb. 14 Ronald Wolberg
Feb. 23 Todd Dyson
Feb. 25 Earl Diskin
Feb. 27 Leila Raim

There will be a Benefit Concert for Parents and Friends of Gays of San Francisco and Bay Area on Saturday Feb 23, 1980, at 8 p.m..

Featured singers are Joan Becker and Betty Kaplowitz.

Location: Metropolitan Community Church
150 Eureka (at 18th)

Tickets: \$4.00--Advance sales only, available at Modern Times Bookstore, 17th street and Sanchez, 621-2675

For additional information call 349-0542
or 626-6937

seder

Congregation Sha'ar Zahav will hold it's third annual Passover seder on Tuesday, April 1, 1980. The seder will be held on the second night of Passover as was done the previous two years. The location of the seder will be announced later.

Ticket order forms will be mailed soon. Please return the completed form as soon as possible to reserve a place at our celebration of Pesach. If anyone would like to help plan this event, please contact Michael Kretman at 928-1255.

This issue of The Jewish Gaily FORWARD was printed and collated by LOU GREENE, 483 Third Street, San Francisco.

reminder

Just a reminder, if you have recently moved or, more importantly, are planning to move, please send a change of address card to our Congregation at P. O. Box 5640, San Francisco, CA 94101 right away. Otherwise, it costs us 25¢ to get your change of address from the Post Office.

congregation sha'ar zahav

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